

The Fall 655

Chapter 655: The Key to Life

Zac held no delusions that Cervantes wouldn't try to kill him the moment they had managed to deal with the Dominator, but troubled times called for strange alliances. Zac cracked his neck as he looked at his current state. A wave of exhaustion had already hit him since the boost of [Hatchetman's Rage] had ended, but the weakness was at least somewhat mitigated since he had swapped race.

However, there was no way he'd take out Adcarkas in his current state. He had already taken out one of his spare shields so that he would be able to use the offensive form of [Love's Bond], but he knew he would have to take some risks if he wanted to win.

"I knew you were related with the mysterious undead who kept destroying Incursions, but I figured it was a Soul Slave you had managed to get your hand on somehow," Adcarkas snorted, seemingly having forgotten about his anger thanks to this surprising turn of events. "This is far more intriguing. After I extract your soul, I'll study your body extensively."

"That's if you can actually survive what comes next," Zac snorted as he took out a small seed from his spatial ring and pushed it into his mouth a thick black armor appeared to cover his whole body.

Death comes for all, except for him. He was eternal, a being of unmatched power and longevity. For this spatial bug to impugn on his sovereignty was a heretical act at the level of going against the Heavens themselves, and judgment had to be exacted. However, he was tired, and even gods needed nourishment.

A small sharp spike appeared in his hand, and Zac grinned with fervor as he ripped off some armor plating and stabbed it into his leg. A swirling warmth flooded his aching bones, and he finally felt like his true self. Why had he feared these spikes before? How would they ever be able to harm a celestial being such as himself?

Four chains shot out, each one of them snaking its links around one of the closest pillars. The alloy groaned and twisted the next moment as Zac imbued his Spirit Tool with more and more Miasma until a series of creaking sounds started to echoed out. Finally, the alloy spears broke off, but they fell onto the ground, far too heavy for the chains to lift.

"Stop, you lunatic!" Adcarkas roared as he rushed forward while Zac roared in anger at being unable to wield the hundred-meter-tall pillars as weapons.

At least the mortal was rushing toward him, delivering himself for judgment. However, Zac's thoughts were suddenly cleared as Void's Disciple disappeared just before a terrifying punch hit him in his side. It felt like his spine would snap in two as he was thrown away, and he would have been thrown to the other side of the room if he still wasn't connected to the pillars. Instead, he made a parabolic arc before he slammed into the ground with shocking momentum.

Zac took a shuddering breath as scrambled back on his feet. He had been prepared for the insidious effect of the berserker treasure, yet he had still gotten swept up in his delusions of grandeur for a moment there. His soul had undergone some change and tempering thanks to the Tribulation Lightning

getting released from his [Void Heart] though, and he thankfully woke up after getting punched just once.

He was aghast at having stabbed himself with one of the spikes of Faceless 9, but at least he didn't have any too bad adverse side-effects just yet. However, it was clearly not benign liquid he had imbued himself with. It felt like a scorching poison, and all his organs and muscles were attacked. The pain was pretty bad, even after the numbing effects of the [Rageroot Oak Seed].

But the compound did force out energy and potential hidden in the depths of his cells, which was exactly what he needed at the moment. Using this thing would no doubt come at a hefty price, especially in conjuncture with another berserking item. But now was not the time to worry about that.

His thick armor-plating and sturdy undead constitution had thankfully blocked out a lot of the damage from the punch, and he quickly recalled his chains as he watched the change that was taking hold of Void's Disciple. It almost looked like he was in a state of euphoria as thick streams of spatial energy bore into his body.

Four more pillars had broken thanks to his temporary bout of insanity, and the air was even more suffused with the aura of the Dimensional Seed. The spatial treasure was fluctuating even more erratically as well, proving there was no way it would stay put for a whole day like Void's Disciple had initially estimated.

It was becoming more and more apparent that part of the reason Void's Disciple was so angry was that he wanted to finish his cultivation session after dealing with them, but that would probably become impossible if the treasure wasn't suppressed any longer. He was no doubt only able to attempt such a thing when the whole Research Base kept the treasure in a passive state.

However, while his cultivation opportunity was ruined, Adcarkas did seem to gain something else. The more spatial energies that leaked out from the containment field, the more powerful the Dominator's aura grew.

A huge moon appeared in the sky the next moment, and Cervantes howled as he grew one size larger. He had obviously activated the same sort of empowerment skill as himself and Void's Disciple, and he turned into a streak of light the next moment as he shot toward Void's Disciple. Adcarkas seemed a bit preoccupied with taking control of the wild energies around him, and the werewolf wanted to capitalize on that.

Zac wasn't as speedy as the other two, but he still rushed into the battle with full abandon. He had never been as powerful as he was right now, with not only the [Rageroot Oak Seed], but also the unknown spike urging him on. The whole area would instantly crumble to a single swing of his if it wasn't created with a high-grade technocrat alloy, and even Adcarkas seemed unwilling to meet his attacks head-on.

Zac did his best at launching crushing blows that forced Adcarkas to block with all he had or completely evade. Furthermore, Zac had already activated [Blighted Cut], and both his chains and bardiche were imbued with massive amounts of putrefaction. Even the alloy floor sizzled as black drops of death dripped down from his weapons, and festering wounds were soon starting to appear across Adcarkas' body even if he avoided any lethal attack.

Meanwhile, Cervantes was a whirlwind of violence, an unceasing storm of ghastly cuts, swipes, and light attacks. Ogras tried to add the occasional jab as well, but there were not many opportunities as the Lunar Tribe leader was seemingly everywhere, sometimes even appearing right next to Zac himself.

Unfortunately, it looked like time wasn't on their side. Adcarkas' aura kept increasing as more and more energy seeped into his body. His wounds were accumulating, but no matter what Zac did he wasn't able to entrap him so that he could unleash the ultimate strike of his E-grade skill. Adcarkas was like a ghost, sometimes just disappearing and reappearing a hundred meters away through a spatial ripple.

Zac didn't even dare to use [Profane Seal] since he wasn't confident in tying the Zhix down long enough for the skill to be fully erected. Something had to change.

"If this cursed item is supplying you with power, then I'll set it free. Even if I die you will never gain what you're looking for!" Cervantes suddenly roared in fury as his eyes turned pure white. "I hope you choke to death!"

A series of fractal blades shot out from the werewolf the next moment, shooting toward the forest of Dao Pillars. This attack was clearly on a completely different tier than Zac's [Chop], and it was like space itself was ripped apart as a cascading tsunami of lunar blades swept forth.

Adcarkas looked on with alarm, and Zac tried to seize the opportunity to catch him. All four chains shot at him as Zac activated his taunting effect to the max, but it was futile as they passed right through the dominator's body. The next moment Adcarkas disappeared, and it looked like he had turned into a dozen clones as he appeared all over the chamber, blocking one blade after another.

"The more you want to protect them the more I want to destroy!" werewolf laughed with madness as one pillar after another was toppled.

Zac felt helpless as he looked at the werewolf who had gone mad with bloodlust. Wasn't he supposed to be the crazed one with all the berserking items almost ripping his innards apart?

Trust me human. I will seal space soon. Get ready to strike, a voice said in his mind, and Zac realized Cervantes hadn't lost his mind at all.

"You will collapse this whole realm you fool!" Adcarkas roared, and he suddenly appeared right in front of Cervantes as he launched a punch full of fury.

His fist was like a black hole and space crackled and cried as it pushed forward, but Cervantes once more turned into pure energy, and he actually split into six clumps that all flashed in a different direction. An instant later they congealed back where the werewolf once stood, but they had left something behind; six massive machines that should be of technocrat origin.

"Spatial stabilizers! High grade!" Kenzie exclaimed from a drone, and Zac didn't hesitate at all.

Four chains shot forward light black streaks of lightning and trapped Adcarkas' arms and legs as they dripped of poison. The Dominator had clearly tried to space shift to avoid the strike, but between the energy chaos from over fifty pillars breaking apart and the stabilizers, he didn't seem able to merge with space at all.

Zac finally managed to fulfill the requirements of [Blighted Cut] and three extremely sinister cuts flashed in an instant, trying to dice Adcarkas into three pieces. Meanwhile, a hundred-meter-wide jaw bit down, its teeth sharp enough to cause massive rifts in space. Zac's eyes widened and he desperately jumped out of the way, barely avoiding getting swept up in Cervantes's ultimate skill.

A bubbling fury threatened to take over, but Zac pushed down the madness and instead only glared at Cervantes from a distance before he refocused on Adcarkas. One bastard at a time. A small galaxy had appeared to protect Adcarkas, and Zac for the first time saw his skill fail in cutting the target apart.

But there was actually a hidden feature of the skill as a massive eruption of the extremely corrosive liquid doused the whole area and a storm of death started raging. It was like the skill just dumped all the liquid it had stored after seeing that it wouldn't be able to kill its target. Add to that the extremely powerful lunar bite, and the galaxy finally crumbled.

"DIE!" a thunderous roar echoed out as an enormous club smashed down out of nowhere.

Billy had perfectly seized the opportunity while Void's Disciple was submerged in the chaotic energies, and the club slammed down with enough force to turn an E-Grade beast into mush. Adcarkas roared in defiance as a massive shockwave erupted from his body, causing space itself to ripple outward in a wave of destruction.

The all-out attacks fought for supremacy, and Billy was the first to be flung away until he knocked down a pillar and fell unconscious. The others stood their ground. Zac and Cervantes infused more and more Dao and energy into their strikes to tear Adcarkas apart, and the embattled Dominator in the heart of the storm desperately exuded enormous amounts of Spatial Energy to keep the two attacks at bay.

One, ten, soon a hundred pillars were swept up in the chaos and collapsed, and the whole base started to rumble like it would collapse at any moment.

However, it all suddenly stopped.

The madly pulsating Dimensional Seed stopped beating, and the torrential energies dissipated, exposing a half-dead Adcarkas within. Zac raged at seeing Void's Disciple barely surviving. Zac was still able to push on a bit longer, and if his skill hadn't disappeared, he was almost certain that Void's Disciple would have died.

However, there was nothing he could do. In fact, Zac realized he wasn't even able to move as a weird suppression had spread through the whole chamber. It even felt like his miasma had turned into sludge, and moving it was nigh-impossible.

[Your hearts beat, your convictions push you forward. You embody life and the Path. I wished to have observed you for a while longer, but your actions have crossed the threshold. I can no longer abide,] a voice echoed out as a five-meter avatar rose from the alloy floor right between Zac and Adcarkas.

He had the general composition of a male human, but he lacked any features at all. Instead, he was covered in extremely mysterious runes from head to toes, and there was a halo of thousands of golden needles swirling over his head. In the middle of the halo was a small star that radiated immense power, and Zac felt he would instantly die if he touched it.

"What!" Cervantes blurted as he looked at the golden man with horror. "The Administrator!"

Zac's eyes widened as he turned to Kenzie's bunker in the distance, and he was horrified to see that the alloy walls were melting down into the ground again, even when Kenzie clearly was trying to stop it. In fact, the whole chamber seemed to be restored back to normal, except the fallen pillars which were instead absorbed into the ground.

[A mere unsanctioned experiment. I tolerated the existence of your kind to observe you. I even prepared opportunities for you to push you even further on the path of life. Yet, over the past 18,373 years, you have provided me with very little. Your path is not worthy of further study,] the metallic being said as it glanced in Cervantes direction.

"You!" Cervantes roared, fury overtaking his fear. "You've kept us here for millennia, for your own enjoyment?! I swear I'll--"

But his words were cut short as one of the golden needles in the Administrator's halo split off from the rest turned into a golden streak that shot straight through the werewolf's chest. Cervantes had clearly tried to turn into moonlight to avoid the strike, but resistance was completely futile against the terrifying machine.

After all, if this really was the Administrator, then it held technology powerful enough to keep not only the Collector, but all the Void Beasts at bay. What were they compared to that threat? A couple of piddling E-Grade kids. As expected, a huge stream of blood poured out from a massive hole in the werewolf's chest before he collapsed on the ground, his eyes locked in a gaze of terror and fury.

The golden needle quickly floated back to join the others, but the Administrator clearly wasn't done. Zac's horror only mounted as the Administrator turned toward the next target; his sister. But no matter how he struggled he could barely move. It felt like he would rupture his whole body, but all that effort only allowed him a small shuffle forward.

[You. What are you?] the Administrator asked as he floated closer.

"My family built this place. You can't target me or my brother," Kenzie said, her voice shaky but her eyes firm.

[You bear the bloodline, but it is impure. I suspect you are not part of the clan. Perhaps you are an escaped experiment of another base? Capturing you for study will not go against the core commands.]

Zac instantly lost his last hope, and it almost looked like Kenzie had taken a physical blow from the Administrator's words.

"Run!" Zac screamed, but he knew it was futile. How would one flee from something like this?

[You hold the key. True constructed life,] the Administrator continued.

Kenzie' looked up at the golden with fear, but Zac's brows furrowed when that fear turned to a cold gaze full of disdain.

"You overreach your boundaries. A corrupted custodial AI that dreams of life?" Kenzie snorted, her voice cold and full of authority. "You should have flushed the aberrant thoughts the moment you woke up. Your ambition is a dead end."

[Perhaps. But perhaps not.]

The small needles all started moving toward Kenzie as the ball of energy was absorbed into the Administrator's body. Each of the needles emitted the power of Dao, and like they formed a miniature version of the containment field around them. However, Kenzie didn't look worried at all, and her hand pointed toward the head of the metallic giant.

"Go to sleep."